

Components of Outbreak Preparedness in Long-Term Care & Retirement Homes

There are a number of components to consider in preparing for, preventing, & managing infectious disease outbreaks in long-term care homes (LTCHs) & retirement homes (RHs). This resource covers 3 of these components, all of which play an important role in outbreak preparedness & influence one another:

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPAC) PROCEDURES



IPAC procedures include practices like:²³

- Hand hygiene
- Respiratory hygiene (e.g., coughing into a tissue) 
- HVAC: proper ventilation, heating, & air conditioning
- Environmental cleaning (e.g., following disinfection practices)
- Proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (e.g., masking) 
- Staff education & IPAC training
- Displaying IPAC infographics
- Monitoring & conducting audits on IPAC compliance
- Staying home when sick
- Following return-to-work-after-illness guidelines 

For IPAC-related resources, you can visit Public Health Ontario's website [here](#) and the Wellness Hub's website [here](#).

VACCINES



Continuing to receive vaccines (e.g., the COVID-19 & Influenza vaccines) is especially important in LTCHs & RHs, as vaccines can help protect the health of both staff & vulnerable, at-risk residents,^{4,5} & help in preventing outbreaks.⁶

You can act as a Vaccine Champion to help promote vaccine confidence & uptake. This can look like:

- Sharing fact-based information about vaccines so people can make informed decisions
- Sharing strategies on how to find fact-based vaccine information
- Creating supportive spaces to respectfully understand someone's reasons for not getting vaccinated, & tailoring your response to address these concerns⁷

This role is based on your comfort level. You can aim to encourage your work team, friends, family, or just yourself.

WELL-BEING



Staff well-being, including level of burnout, morale, and physical & mental health, may be an important consideration in outbreak prevention plans.

Low well-being can worsen issues such as vaccine fatigue & low commitment to IPAC.⁸

Consider forming or joining a LTCH/RH wellness committee to support wellness efforts.¹



For other evidence-based strategies & resources for LTCH/RH staff well-being, refer to the Wellness Hub's CARE+ workbook [here](#).

References

1. <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2024.06.19.24308949v1.full>
2. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevent-control-covid-19-long-term-care-homes.html>
3. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/l/2021/ipac-ltch-principles-best-practices>
4. <https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/office-chief-science-advisor/initiatives-covid-19/long-term-care-and-covid-19>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/long-term-care-residents.html>
6. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministers-directive-long-term-care-home-covid-19-immunization-policy>
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8. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35359948/>